

CARTOONISTS | 'Strident,' 'infuriating' are high praise

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"They're like federal judges."
"We either wait 20 to 30 years for them to die, or we — I don't know — we can assassinate 'em," Shansby concluded.
The older cartoonists complain about profit-driven publishers and fearful editors, who are firing editorial cartoonists or not replacing them.
It's cheaper and less controversial to use syndicated cartoons drawn elsewhere, rather than pay a staff member to depict the mayor as a drooling, slope-browed moron, they said.
"What's happened with newspapers in the last 20 years is that we don't want to make anyone unhappy," said R.C. Harvey, a comics historian who has drawn for many newspapers and magazines over the last several decades.

"For Christ's sake, what kind of a newspaper is that, if you don't get anybody mad?" Harvey asked. "Why even publish a newspaper if you're not going to make waves?"

About 90 daily newspapers in the United States, roughly half the number that did in the 1980s, employ a full-time editorial cartoonist, said Matt Davies of the Westchester (N.Y.) *Journal News*, president-elect of the association.

Among the larger papers to drop their cartoonists are the San Jose (Calif.) *Mercury News* and the St. Paul (Minn.) *Pioneer Press*.

"Are we going to end up with three or four cartoonists? I don't know, but I hope not," said Davies, who presumably strengthened his own job security April 5 by winning the Pulitzer Prize.

Newspapers facing a shrinking readership — and that's nearly all of them — should realize the value of local cartoonists, Davies said.

People love to hate their local cartoonists, he said.

"It's human to love to bitch and moan about something," he said. "I've got some readers who call me every week to com-

plain about my cartoons, to the point that I have to assume — on some level, anyway — they like to be offended."

If readers like to be offended, editorial cartoonists are delighted to oblige.
At yesterday's panel sessions — in a hall packed with smart and tart artists — the highest praise that people offered each other included words like "strident," "infuriating" and "sav- age."

Oliphant, whose cartoons appear in the *Herald-Leader* and other papers nationally, told an appreciative crowd about his work roasting the Catholic church — usually over the child-sex scandal, but more recently to jeer at Mel Gibson's hyper-violent film *The Passion of the Christ*.

For his *Passion* cartoon, Oliphant drew a battered schoolboy staggering away from a towering, furious nun. The boy had a huge grin on his face; a light bulb hovered over his head in a thought balloon.

The caption read: "In his early school days, Little Mel Gibson gets beaten to a bloody pulp by Sister Dolorosa Excruciated of the Little Sisters of the Holy Agony, and an idea is born."

In the ensuing controversy, which included strong criticism from Catholics, the Boston *Globe* apologized for running the cartoon. Its ombudsman told readers, in her column, "The point of this particular cartoon didn't equal the cost."

Oliphant said he enjoys provoking such a reaction.

Years ago, he said, aides to arch-conservative Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., now retired, revealed to Oliphant that their boss loved to see cartoons about himself.

Helms had been one of Oliphant's favorite targets.

"I nearly cried," Oliphant said.

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TRUDEAU | A few papers pulled or edited recent strips

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Trudeau said. "But it seemed far more useful to look at these extreme sacrifices, short of death, that are being made by the troops in the field."

"It's profound — his life will never be the same," Trudeau said.

B.D. — one of the strip's central characters since its debut in 1970 — originally was based on Brian Dowling, captain of the Yale University football team in 1968, when Trudeau was a student there. Until Wednesday, he never appeared without one type of helmet or another concealing most of his head.

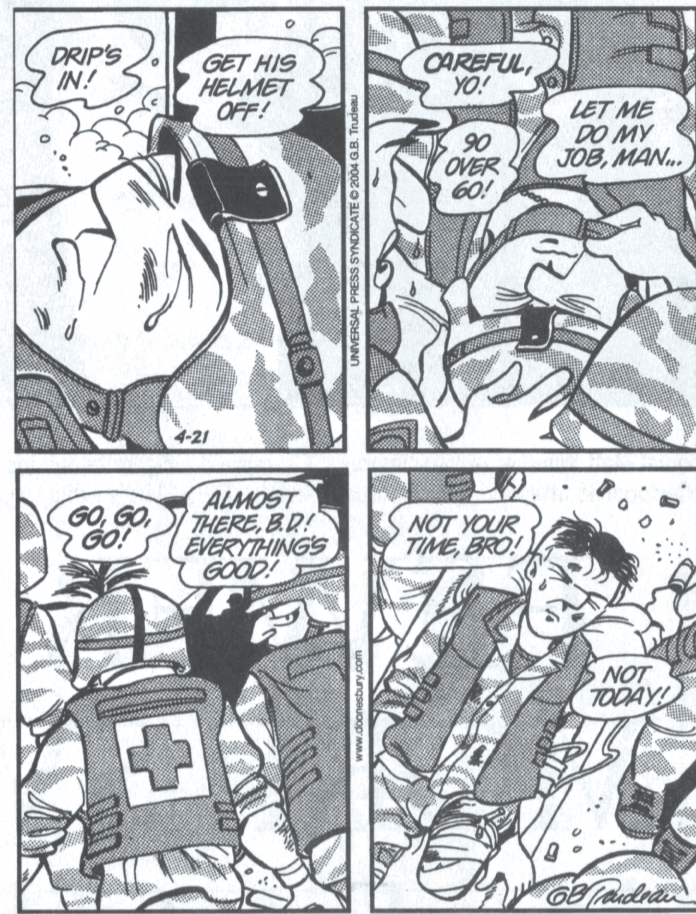
As it often does, Doones-

bury this week offended the sensibilities even of some newspapers that publish it.

The *Journal-Advocate* of Sterling, Colo., chose not to run the strips related to B.D.'s

injury, complaining about Trudeau's "graphic, violent battlefield depictions of Iraq." The *News-Chronicle* of Green Bay, Wis., edited B.D.'s cry of "Son of a bitch!" — as he awoke after surgery — out of

yesterday's strip. "It's simply a matter of taste," *News-Chronicle* editor Tom Brooker explained to his readers. "Trudeau is obviously prepared to cross a line, and I'm not."



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TRUMAN | Schools try to get kids to take tests seriously

From Page B1

semblies where certificates and other goodies are handed out to achievers. Jessie Clark Middle School, cited by Fayette's central office as a model rewards program, offers a tiered reward system that includes certificates, candy bars, academic letters, trophies and movie passes.

And if the carrot doesn't work, there is always the stick. Privileges such as dress-down days and field trips could be revoked for schools that aren't up to snuff. Students who don't prove they've mastered the test may well find themselves spending more time back in the classroom, learning the basics.

At Bryan Station High School, a distinguished score used to earn you \$25 cash. Now the cash reward has been dropped, but the \$25 value can still be converted to gift certificates and merchandise. Henry Clay offers incentives that include lanyards and free prom admission. Other high schools offer final exam exemptions among their incentives for high performing students.

Meanwhile, Bryan Station has turned its construction project into a test incentive. Faced with a parking space crunch while the new school is being built over the next two years, the school will offer parking

permits only to students earning a "proficient" or "distinguished" rating.

Kentucky's schools don't have specific regulations regarding testing incentives; they simply urge schools to use their best judgment and keep rewards consistent with the "school culture."

And schools are careful to extend parts of the goody pool to students who may not be able to blow the lid off standardized tests, but still make a conscientious effort. (Anybody familiar with the work habits of teenagers knows that conscientious effort can be a bit erratic, particularly when there's no immediate reward involved.) Students who answer all questions, write legibly and focus on testing may also find themselves winners from schools offering a general prize pool.

"We want to celebrate everybody doing the best they can," says Ann Rea Anderson, instructional coach at Jessie Clark Middle School. And schools emphasize that they honor students not only for high test performance, but also for other achievements, at other times in the year.

Nonetheless, testing has become a celebratory season in schools, which offer everything from Yates Elementary's test "camp" to test pep rallies to

outright gifts.

You can be of two minds about this:

■ That KERA changed everything about Kentucky education, including not just how and what we learn but how we reward learning.

■ That many of us never got spiffy prizes, encouraging certificates, special privileges or prize pools and yet managed to pull ourselves together to conquer standardized tests anyway.

The education supporter in me believes the former: A rising tide of student achievement lifts all students, even if they're riding a tide of candy and free prom tickets. The parent of

teenagers in me, a more cynical soul, wonders if somewhere in this there is a lesson lost about a job well done being its own reward.

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